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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIA/GEORGIA: IVANOV DISMISSIVE OF SAAKASHVILI'S
ACCUSATIONS

REF: A. MOSCOW 754

[1](#)B. TBILISI 157

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. At the end of a January 25 meeting devoted primarily to Iran (ref A), Ambassador raised the Georgian energy supply issue with Russian Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov. In a brief response, Ivanov dismissed Georgian President Saakashvili's accusations against Russia, calling them the product of a "rich imagination" and reflective of Saakashvili's incompetent leadership of Georgia. Work in Russia is continuing to restore gas and electricity supplies (septel), but a cooling of the rhetoric on both sides of this dispute could enhance the chances for progress on this and the other bilateral issues needing resolution. END SUMMARY.

Ivanov in Head-Shaking Mode

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador raised Georgia's concerns and the need to restore the energy supply as soon as possible. Ivanov responded in a bemused, dismissive tone. It could only be a person with a "very rich imagination," he said, "who could think Russia would blow up its own gas and electric facilities on its own territory supposedly to harm Georgia, when the supplies go also to Armenia -- and while Kocharyan is in Moscow to meet with Putin on energy supplies and to open the 'Year of Armenia' in Russia." The rashness and implausibility of Saakashvili's accusations, Ivanov continued, were all too representative of the Georgian President's pattern of actions in office. Saakashvili habitually violated commitments he had entered into (e.g., "all the commitments he made on Ajaria"), and could not be regarded on as a reliable negotiating partner.

[1](#)3. (C) Warming to his subject, Ivanov said it was not entirely clear why Saakashvili had instantly accused the GOR of sabotage when Russian gas and electric facilities were blown up. Saakashvili was a "very emotional and impressionable" person, and his reactions often depended on those with whom he was speaking at any particular time. Perhaps his statements in this case were simply "spontaneous." He had been "unready" when he came to power, and even with support and help from EU countries and the U.S. he had shown himself to be unable to solve Georgia's problems. Russia had agreed to withdraw its forces from its bases in Georgia, for instance, but Saakashvili had not tried to build on that positive step. On Abkhazia, Russia had urged him to enter into discussions and negotiations with the Abkhaz and to put forward proposals, but all Saakashvili wanted to do was to blame all his problems on Russia.

[1](#)4. (C) All in all, Ivanov repeated several times, it was "too bad" that a country with Georgia's strategic importance and possibilities had such inadequate leadership. In Armenia and Azerbaijan there were also serious problems, but in those countries there was at least some overall positive "vector of

movement," while in Georgia there was none.

15. (C) Ambassador again stressed the urgency and importance of restoring gas and electricity to Georgia, and to cooling the rhetoric on both sides. Ivanov said he agreed. Gazprom had been instructed to move as fast as possible.

Comment

16. (C) Ivanov was on this occasion in a "more in incredulity and bemusement than in anger" mode in dismissing Saakashvili's accusations against Russia, but anger is at or not far below the surface for many other Russian officials dealing with Georgia. Work continues on restoring the gas and electricity supplies to Georgia in difficult weather conditions (septel). While Saakashvili has made clear (ref B) that international pressure needs to be brought on Russia as an unreliable energy supplier, his public comments about Russia are not calculated to elicit a positive reaction out of Moscow on this or other issues. A cooling of the rhetoric on both sides of the issue could enhance the chances for progress on this and the other bilateral issues requiring resolution.

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